

K9s Hope to Dodge Budget Bullet

Police dogs protect and serve -- without proper protective gear

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San Mateo County Sheriff's Office

Budget troubles aren't just hounding state lawmakers. Bay Area police dogs are feeling the pinch too.

Officers say as many as 100 dogs from departments across the Bay Area report for duty without bulletproof vests.

Police dogs often handle the most dangerous tasks. [Santa Clara](#) Police K9 Handler Christopher Bell says his German shepherd, 3-year-old Cesar, tracks down suspects, patrols SWAT incidents and sniffs for hidden narcotics.

Canines are particularly vulnerable to attacks from suspects desperate to avoid arrest. Officers say their canine partners risk being stabbed, shot and beaten. Some have even died in the line of duty.



Bay Area police dogs like OPD's Kuda, shown here...



It costs about \$30,000 to train and get one of the...

To Bell, Cesar is more than a pet. "He's our partner," says Bell. "He's the one thing I can count on at all times to do what I need him to do. I need to offer him the same protection that I have to keep him safe."

So what's keeping every Bay Area canine from being outfitted with the proper protective gear?

The cost. On average, canine vests cost \$1,400 -- almost twice the amount of human vests.

It costs cities about \$30,000 to train each dog so, police say, protecting the valuable resources is worth the price.

"The dogs themselves are costly and the training associated with them is costly," says [Santa Clara Police](#) spokesman [Phil Cooke](#), "so providing them with a protective vest, though itself is expensive, protects a larger investment."

Today, all Bay Area Pet Food Express locations will accept donations for the "[Cover Your K9](#)" fund. The stores will also donate 100% of funds from dog wash tokens to the cause. There will also be dog demonstrations at the Campbell, [San Francisco](#) and [San Carlos](#) locations.